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# SILVER LINING

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## THE EXPERIENCES OF A WAR BRIDE

*By*

R. W. F.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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*Published November 1918*

TO MY SERGEANT

*"Praying the dear God to keep you,*
*My Soldier — wherever you are."*

# PREFACE

THIS *little book is dedicated to my husband, who has far surpassed the most extravagant of my "teen age" dreams of a possible Prince Charming.*

*And yet, an underlying dedication I feel is also due to the dear mother and father in whose early influence the spirit of the following pages was undoubtedly rooted.*

*The author makes no claim to the subtleties of literary distinction, this being the narrative, simple and unadorned, of what one woman has learned from war. And if, by virtue only of priority in experience, it affords the merest scrap of comfort and optimism to those who are at the portals of a similar experience, its existence will have been justified.*

R. W. F.

# SILVER LINING

# In Appreciation

*Over my heart I wear it,*
*My brave little Service Star!*
*Praying the dear God to keep you,*
*My Soldier — wherever you are.*

*Under the emblem your image*
*Is written in heart-beats of mine;*
*It mirrors the every-day level*
*Of living, as wholly Divine.*

*As Launcelot's Shield was embroidered,*
*A fabric for my Knight I weave.*
*My soul is inlaid through the pattern,*
*And all that I am — and believe!*

*Its colors are painted in yearning,*
*And threads that are spun one by one*
*Form substance of Hope and Assurance*
*Through Faith — of the Future to come!*

* * * * * * *

*Over my heart I wear it,*
*My brave little Service Star!*
*Praying the dear God to keep you,*
*My Soldier — wherever you are.*

R. W. F.

(Published in American Khakiland)

# Silver Lining

## CHAPTER I

It is June!

June of silvery green leaves joyously aquiver in the warm gold of summer newborn. June of the blushing, breathless dusk that so gradually blurs into starry evening. June of roses! — June of brides! —

A year ago it was my June, and to-day is the anniversary — the first anniversary of my wedding. Four weeks ago, one morning, just as the dawn broke through the gentle mist of budding spring, my husband sailed for France. A year ago it was my June, when all the world and the reason for it was suddenly revealed to me. It was Arcady!

And yet, to-day, June is mine too — in spite of all the past year's loneliness, the ache of separation, the suspending (for the

time being) of all that makes life livable — yes, because of it, this June is more truly mine, for it has taught me that after all it is not we who live in Arcady, but Arcady that lives in us! For joy and love are not lessened by suffering; rather are they deepened and glorified with an intensity of tenderness which "passeth understanding."

We had two months together, two months of such utter content and happiness that life seemed almost too good to be true.

Then one day, in August, it was announced that married men were also to be called. I can remember the feeling of helplessness as the morning headlines stared up at me.

Some days later, the Boy having passed his physical examination (though but recently recovered from appendicitis), the question of exemption was suddenly put to me. I had only a few moments to consider it. We had every right to the claim — except the moral right! — and I faced the

hardest decision of my life. It would n't be honest to say that my answer was instantaneous (heroics struggle — they do not leap!) but even through the mass of conflicting emotions I knew what I should say. All my life I have prayed to be equal to anything Fate might demand — and so, presently (the Boy was watching me, white, eager), I said quietly, "Certainly you shan't claim exemption. There must be no compromise with Honor." For a moment the Boy did n't speak. Then he straightened up, drew a sigh of relief, smiled, and exclaimed, "I knew you would say that." And his smile was reward enough!

So together we left the office of the local board, our souls serene — and our hearts leaden.

Then, when after leaving him at his office I turned my own steps homeward, there came to my mind the realization, and determination, that henceforth I was to be a soldier's wife, not a citizen's! (And there

is a vast difference between them, for the former involves a sacrifice of practically all that the latter means!) And so I began to plan an unusually festive dinner for that evening (*entre nous*) to celebrate my début in the new rôle!

Donning the gown my husband particularly liked, after everything was ready I ran down the street to meet his train. Walking back, arm in arm, I informed him gayly, "We're entertaining a soldier for dinner this evening!" He looked curious, and, explaining, I added confidentially, "But, of course, there will be nobody there except you and me!" Then I dashed up the steps ahead of him, for I did n't want to be kissed in full view of the neighborhood!

Well, it was a wonderful occasion, that little dinner — and while each of us crammed down the lump in our throats, and vied with each other in gay repartee, underneath was the solemn consciousness

of having entered into a covenant fully as significant as our marriage promises.

Later in the evening, the tension snapped, and we clung together with the realization of what we were facing.

## CHAPTER II

AND so the die was cast.

It was hard at first to maintain that spontaneous resolve, and to keep the flame burning steadily day by day. We enter life much as we do a church or lecture hall, with our own preconceived ideas about where we shall sit. We look over the space with appraising eye; we say, "Ah! there's a good seat down front, in full view of the speaker and the music — I'll sit there." And the aisle stretching out apparently straight before us, we stride along confidently. But only for a few steps. An usher overtakes us, politely but firmly, and before we know it we are seated halfway down — on the side — behind a post!

Of course we may leave the building, since we are thwarted in our destination, but, curiously, most of us prefer to remain and face the music! At first we squirm —

we cannot see the speaker's face, nor watch the organist's hands (all on account of the post), but gradually we discover that it is what the speaker says that matters, and what the organist plays that touches us, till finally, the post is impotent.

So, in September, when the first quota was called, came my first real "post," as a soldier's wife, to eliminate; and that was to "send him away with a smile." (Only those who have accomplished that smile know its cost!)

Looking back, I sometimes think that first parting was the hardest fight of the subsequent year of fights.

It was all so new. To my now somewhat maturer conception of renunciation, I was psychologically young and unprepared. Until my marriage I had never been away from my family more than a month at a time, and suddenly, after only two short months of my new life, three hundred miles from my own home, came the "acid test"

— the gauntlet that fell before thousands of other brides, as well as before me. (But, oh! you thousands of others, are n't you glad that you bent and picked it up? I am!)

I shall never forget the poignancy of that first evening after our parting. I was spending the night with my husband's mother, and when the waning twilight and deepening darkness overwhelmed me with almost terrifying loneliness, I rushed to the bathroom, turned on all the faucets (so no one could hear me), and sobbed from my very toes! I include that confession to show that the strength and courage which afterward came to me were by no means at my complete and immediate disposal.

That was Wednesday.

After centuries had passed, Sunday came, and motoring out to camp I saw the Boy in uniform for the first time. And *from that moment* our separation began to take on glimmerings of glory along with its pain! I

was so proud of him! Besides, it was splendid to feel that in the country's championing of the Great Cause we, too, belonged.

In about three weeks my Soldier was given his first twenty-four-hour pass, and mere words fail to express the ecstasy of that reunion — nor the swiftness of its passing.

Soon after this I was offered a church position in the suburb where we had spent our first wonderful summer together, which I gladly accepted; for it was as near my husband's camp as I could hope to be; it would keep me occupied as well as provide an opportunity to continue work in my beloved music — and it meant, in a way, a home-going.

It was middle October, in the dusk of a late fall afternoon, that I descended, alone, from the train to the platform of the pretty little station we had left together a few weeks — *was* it only weeks? — before. The train happened to be the 5.18 express from

Boston, the one the Boy had always come home on. I recognized many familiar "commuters" as they sprang from the steps, rattling evening papers in that strange, indefinable, "Well, it's-good-to-be-home-again" way — and it was with a great sense of aloneness that I turned from my accustomed route, and in a different direction to my new abode.

That evening (my first experience of living in one room here, getting meals around the corner there), the doorbell rang, and there stood my Soldier! — borne thither by a rickety little old Ford, which chugged complacently at the curb as if aware of the precious surprise it had brought me. It might have been a gold chariot, so hungrily overjoyed was I to see the Boy!

It seemed that an officer, hard up for cash, had offered the car (!) for $115 — and after the usual bickering took a check for $112.50 — and the time being just after

Retreat the Boy jumped in and drove straight to me — that is, as straight as rough roads, in a Ford, and two hours, can be!

"Was I foolish to get it?" he asked.

"I should say not!" I caroled joyously. "We can't buy any furniture till this old war is over, and we can have some jolly good times in this funny thing on wheels!"

Thereupon it was christened the "Jolly Rattler," and hopping in we rode around the village till it was time for the Boy to go back to camp for "Taps."

(P.S. We had many a ride in the "Jolly Rattler" before cold weather made us sell it; and never a Pierce-Arrow that swept us by in high disdain carried one half the tonnage of pure joy that humble "Henry" boasted!)

## CHAPTER III

THUS autumn passed.

And, little by little, I began to adjust myself to the new circumstances; trying (not always succeeding brilliantly) to make each day a stronger demonstration of my fervent creed; to *love*, *work*, and *hope*, as never before! And the more I honestly tried to find light where shadows *appeared* to be, the more I found to be grateful for — the gladder I was to claim a tiny share in the Battle for Principle.

Feeling this, and having come in contact with a few wives (happily in the minority), who, situated as I was, proceeded to make themselves, and incidentally their soldier husbands, miserable, through their inability to see any justice in the appropriation of their men by the Government — it seemed to me that the *women* of the Country had a very definite and necessary part to play;

they to maintain optimism and courage, keeping the Lamp of Inspiration trimmed, so to speak, while the men learned how to fight. And I wanted to shout for coöperation, for concerted effort toward that endeavor.

Well, the only way for a conventional person to "shout," and "according to Hoyle," is *via* the press; so therewith poured I my earnest convictions into an article which, after laborious and anxious conclusion, was duly bundled off to meet the possible acceptance or rejection of an editor.

In the meantime, the Boy was made First Sergeant of his battery, and I was as thrilled as if it had been a generalship! Indeed, as my glance rests on the little chevron, framed and standing on my dressing-table, which, with the inscription, "October 23, 1917 — 301 F.A., Battery F," denoted the proud achievement — it seems to me that no generalship could ever bring quite the quiver of pride which flamed for my Sergeant!

## Silver Lining

Compensation for our sacrifice manifested itself in numberless ways. One instance of this occurred during the time of the Y.M.C.A. campaign when my husband was asked to speak at a big rally in the Armory of his home town. Standing well back in the flag-waving crowd, it was quite all I could manage to keep my heart in its proper place, when my khaki-clad Soldier, standing straight and eloquent and convincing, finished his speech amid wild cheers of approval! — Oh, yes! it was all worth while.

At Thanksgiving the Boy obtained four days' leave, and we went home to my people. Needless to relate, there ensued much proud exhibiting, on my part, of my uniformed husband. Another compensation, you see.

Soon after our return, one Sunday, the Boy excitedly brought me the paper, magazine section open, with the words, "Have you written anything lately?" I grabbed the sheet from his hands, and, sure enough,

there was my article, in grown-up headlines, with a nice little editorial comment attached! It really was mine, but no signature being given, I asked the Boy curiously, "What makes you think I wrote it?" He laughed. "Anybody who knows you could n't fail to recognize the exclamation marks and parentheses." So I owned up, and what the Boy said about it made me happier than the subsequent check that followed in the course of a few days.

Ah! you successful authors, to whose mature experience editorial comments and checks are matter-of-fact and logical — *you* may smile tolerantly at my exuberance over that modest acceptance; but to me, it meant a step farther — a goal nearer — I had earned the Boy's applause; and best of all, the conviction in which I so sincerely desired supporters was being circulated — and, perhaps, in an infinitesimal degree, I was beginning to do my "bit."

## CHAPTER IV

SOON after this the opportunity was offered me to spend a month at Camp Devens, in the capacity of Volunteer Hostess, at the Y.W.C.A. Hostess House. Naturally the appeal of being so near my husband was in itself sufficient inducement, aside from the splendid chance to make myself useful, so without further ado I found myself installed in the Land of Khaki.

My subsequent experience there (detailed impressions of which have since been published under the title "Being Hostess in a Military Camp") convinced me more than ever of the great need for cheery courage and patriotic loyalty among the women upon whom their embryonic soldiers so obviously depend. Compare the attitude of one soldier who declared proudly to me, "I never could have enlisted if mother had n't been such a thorough good sport!

I felt she needed me at home and it would be selfish to go, but no — she said, with her hands on my shoulder — 'Son, *you go!* and your mother stands back of you!' Gee! I could have licked the whole German army after that." Compare that case, I say, with another soldier whose wife always departed in tears whenever she came to visit him at camp, and then tell me which soldier marched with a song in his heart?

I met many mothers and wives, from all over the land, during my work there, and was repeatedly thrilled and uplifted by countless evidences of bravery and idealism. And it inspired me with fresh determination to keep pace, to the limit of endeavor, with the Soldier whose name I bore — to "carry on" with a vision — and a smile!

Quite aside from the psychological effect of surroundings military and, consequently disciplining (such as having to bid one's husband "Good-night" at five minutes of

ten, his having been there only five minutes, to the contrary notwithstanding), there remained the very interesting adventure of just living in a military camp. It was, obviously, a privilege very few women have been permitted to enjoy in this war.

It was exhilarating to tramp off, of an afternoon, up the snow-packed road that crunched beneath the measured tread of hiking squads, to the Camp Post-Office; there to replenish the Hostess House stamp-box.

It was novel to wake to the sound of the Reveille call, the buglers echoing one another in the distance, in the stillness of early morning.

It was thrilling, at dusk, to watch rigid figures silhouetted against pale sunset, standing motionless, at Retreat, while the Nation's Flag was lowered.

Then, at the end of evening, strangely like a benediction, floated the music of that most beautiful of bugle calls — "Taps"!

when as the notes died away, out across the barracks-dotted snow, thousands of little twinkling lights were blotted, one by one, into the darkness. . . .

On Christmas Night, standing by my open window, the sweet, familiar strains came to me with deeper significance; for it was as if these Trumpeters of the Great Crusade were bringing, as the angels brought long ago, that night of the Christ-Child's birth, the self-same message: "Great tidings of joy — on earth, *Peace!* — good will — toward men!"

## CHAPTER V

In January the Boy won an appointment to the Officers' Training Camp, and my pride again scaled the heights. Nothing seemed too hard for his accomplishment, and I began, womanlike, to picture him in spurs and a "Sam Browne" belt. And, by the way, if any one had asked, about this time, whether I wished we had claimed exemption, I should have flamed with righteous indignation. Curiously enough, the months had brought not only adjustment, but an honest and wholly sincere *zest* in the Game! As the "boys" would remark, in popular camp argot, I was "in the Army now!" And I had discovered that discipline is truly soul-stimulating when the cause for which we are disciplined is humanitarian.

Shortly after the O.T.C. commenced its training, my husband's battery was quar-

antined for measles, and for over a month the Boy was unable to leave camp, during which time we were obliged to console ourselves with letters, and my weekly visit to camp. There I was permitted to see him only outside the barracks, where the rules of quarantine allowed us to walk one hundred yards in each direction. As it was zero weather then, walking — within a restricted area — was not the most unalloyed joy. However, we always had the consoling fact that at least, so far, the Boy was still on this side of the "Pond."

This was our one cheering thought, when, the afternoon over, I would start wistfully off down the road, in the wake of a winter sunset — the Boy standing, watching me to the curve where the road dips out of sight, and where I always turned to wave gayly to him. It was hard to leave, yet, when I think of the greater demand on courage that was to follow a few months later, I wonder how the former could have

gripped me so. I suppose we are never given strength in advance of our need, as we plod up our Hills of Difficulty; and so each elevation appears as a mountain until we stand on its peak.

My biggest "mountain" came suddenly.

One Saturday, early in April, in the first hints of spring, came the overseas call!

The telephone rang. Over the wire the Boy's voice came in queer, jerky sentences: "Thirty-six hours' leave — can't tell you anything more — wild rumors afloat — get some one to sing in your place to-morrow — telephone the Plaza — meet you there this afternoon —" Surprised at my own calmness, I listened to his instructions, then hung up the receiver in a dazed fashion. He had n't mentioned France, but my beating heart spelled the truth.

I only cried for a moment or so — there was so much to be done; and it was a poor time for a soldier's wife to indulge in tears. Above all, there was the ever-persistent

challenge to patriotism, and I must n't be found wanting. In other words, rehearsals were over — the Play was on; and I had n't been studying the lines all those months, just to miss the cue.

I went to my room and, gathering together all the socks and things which the Boy had been keeping with me, I packed them up, in case his leaving should be precipitate. Kneeling on the floor in the midst of things, my mind reverted to the day after he had gone to camp, when I had packed away the "mufti," and I wondered, dully, why I had suffered so keenly when he was only going to camp. . . . *This* was France!

The hours dragged until I saw him and learned the little he himself knew.

That evening we arranged everything that was necessary, planning about addresses, cablegrams — all the frantic eleventh-hour reminders that are familiar to every one who has gone through with it.

Each kept up for the other, when, suddenly, the Boy glanced anxiously at me.

"Why don't you just cry it out? You must n't swallow the thing any longer — the strain shows in your face —" After all, we loved each other. Life was a beautiful thing to be *shared*, not renounced — and we had only just begun to discover its wonder —

My heart began to overflow my soul.

"Please," he urged — and held out his arms!

# Bon Voyage

*Mayhap you deem it passing strange*
*That I should* smile *to-day,*
*When on the morrow's dawn a transport*
*Bears you leagues away —*
*But, ah! no blinding tears shall dim my eyes*
*Because — you see —*
*I'm saving* tears *to cry for Joy —*
*When you come back to me!*

R. W. F.

(Published in American Khakiland)

## CHAPTER VI

THE following day was spent in visiting friends, the Boy bidding temporary farewells and receiving warm, cheery "God-speeds." He was n't supposed to tell people where he was going, so he merely intimated that he *might* be seasick shortly. . . . And no one demanded any further explanation.

That evening, just before the Boy returned to camp (from where he was to leave the next morning for the camp of embarkation), there came a heaven-sent message; an invitation from the mother of one of the Boy's fellow candidates, who chanced to be visiting her son when the sudden order overseas came. Her home was near the embarkation camp to which the men were going, and she insisted that when they left, I follow and come to her for the time they remained on this side.

War has proved a sort of common denominator, to which we who participate are

brought together in grateful *camaraderie;* and so the understanding which prompted her invitation made its glad acceptance obvious. And to my husband and me, the incident was more than a happenstance; — it was just another wonderful assurance of "Green Pastures."

Almost before I was up the following morning, came word from the Camp Y.M.C.A. (according to the Boy's promise) that the men had left.

In another hour I was on *my* way, also.

In New York, some hours later — at the Grand Central Station, it seemed to me that every girl on the train was being greeted by a uniform! While I — I walked like Mr. Kipling's cat, ". . . all by myself; and all things were alike to me!"

The following week, thanks to my new-found friend, we motored to camp each day, making the most of our time with the Boys.

Then — one afternoon, they were ordered

to pack their barracks bags, and we knew the time was up. We had been having luncheon out on the Hostess House lawn (for spring was smiling!) and just before Retreat, the Boys said quietly, "You had better leave now."

So they sauntered along with us toward the waiting motor, laughing and joking about a proposed house-party on July 4th, for all the world as if they believed it! — Their white faces, however, belied any sense of frivolity. But when we reached the car, we took leave of them, smiling . . . as on previous days . . . and that was all. The car moved off slowly; and in another moment, whirling away, as we turned to wave to them they were just little brown specks in the road behind us. . . .

Such is the pretending mask beneath which we humans stifle our emotions; heads up — eyes smiling — lips firm, in our fierce desire to play the Game!

## CHAPTER VII

NEXT morning I went home to my own family for a brief visit. It was a visit, and not a permanent home-going for this reason; long before the Boy went across, I had made up my mind that when he did go I would stay on in Boston, retaining my church position, and finding some regular work in which to do my "bit."

Just how difficult the carrying out of that resolve was, I discovered when I went home. After all, it was the natural and easy thing to do — to take my place again in the family circle which was so dear to me. All my friends assumed that I had come back for "the duration of the War"; my family wanted me, but they generously, and to my everlasting gratitude, understood my decision and did not make my holding to it the more difficult by urging. It was the situation which comes to every one sometime

— a show-down of the courage of one's convictions.

It would have been so comforting to be with my own people in my loneliness — also logical. But the Pillar of Fire pointed otherwise, to my mind. It was to go back, take up life where I had so hurriedly dropped it (this time without the week-ends with the Boy to anticipate) — and, one way or another, make good.

You see, my husband had gone to France. Over there he would encounter experiences, hardships, dangers, opportunities, which of themselves would enlarge his horizon, mentally as well as geographically — experiences that could not help but broaden and develop even beyond the degree of perfection I already believed him to occupy.

Was I to stand still in his absence? Just being cheerful and optimistic was n't enough. That was not progress — it was only the corner-stone. On it must be built

thoroughly and solidly such efforts and ideals as will make for comprehensive companionship after the War.

Unable to share in the actual fighting of battles and attending experiences thereof, I must find some way in just every-day living through which to approximate more nearly that attitude of mind and soul with which our soldiers will return imbued.

In other words, I must inaugurate and graduate in a sort of Training Course for After-the-War Wives!

Perhaps the question arises, as it did with my friends, "Why can't you be busy at home?" And the answer was that it would be no test of endurance nor courage of initiative, to work in an easy atmosphere. My husband was coping with new and uncompromising situations — how could I hope to echo him ever so faintly if my own activities were cushioned?

That is the responsibility we wives of soldiers must face, and face frankly, in this

period when our men in France are earning immortal honor and glory.

What are we doing to deserve their return to us? As surely as dawn follows night, there is to be reconstruction in *people*, as well as in affairs, when this War is ended — else what has the suffering taught us?

Surely nothing less than our highest endeavors, our broadest sympathies, our most loyal love, and our most passionate, unswerving faith in the eventual outcome of things — can avail in the present necessity!

Meredith has said — and it is strangely apt in the crisis of current affairs —

*"Thou that dreamest an Event*
*While Circumstance is but a waste of sand —*
*Arise! take up thy fortunes in thy hand,*
*And daily forward pitch thy tent."*

## CHAPTER VIII

So I went back.

But I left a promise to postpone my search for regular day-to-day work until the fall, so that my church vacation might be spent with my family.

However, there was plenty to do in the meantime, what with the usual War work, knitting, etc., and the completion of a course in literature which I had started in January, as well as one on Americanization.

It would be neglecting the most important phase of my War experience if I failed to chronicle the state of mind to which I had gravitated, slowly but surely, since the Boy donned khaki.

The need for optimism and my consciousness thereof I have already mentioned — but not until the Boy had actually sailed, and was on the high seas some indefinite

"*somewhere*" between me and the Great Adventure, with all its accompanying vagueness — not until then did I realize that the effort toward good courage had rooted in deep, sure faith. It was amazing and exhilarating to find, in my heart of hearts, that my hopes were stronger by far than my anxiety.

So, when he had finally sailed, the fact of trust over worry was not merely for appearance's sake, nor yet to play the Game like a sportsman — it was something that I very definitely owed — to what Walt Whitman described as "Santa Spirita, breather, life — Beyond the light, lighter than light — Beyond Paradise! — the *tallying* song of the soul."

It is not easy to explain coherently what I mean, but the substance of it all is recognition of the call of the Ideal to the Individual as well as the Nation.

Hence, in the interim between the Boy's

sailing and his arrival on the other side, it was possible for me to reply truthfully, when people sympathized thus — "I suppose you will be dreadfully worried till you hear that your husband has landed safely" — "No, worrying is against my principles." Because it seemed to me that worrying was n't giving Faith credit for keeping my Boy in safety.

I know there are certain people (perhaps the reader among them) who may have thought — "How could she help being anxious — if she really loved him?" But they are the same ones who, conversely, would have said (if I *had* worried) — "Why does n't she brace up?"

So, after all, the wisest course is as O. Henry bluntly put it — "*Please yourself!*"

Besides, these people would never understand that it was *because* I loved, and loved greatly, that worry was smothered up in faith. . . . God had given me a love out-

shadowing my highest dreams. Why should I not trust Him to guard it?

And in due season, came the cablegram, "Arrived safely — Love."

# A Spring Song

(*In Autumn*)

*It seems so long —*
*So long ago,*
*That poignant day last Spring —*
*When all the world bestirred itself*
*From sleep, to blossoming;*
*When timid buds their flower faces*
*Lifted to the sky*
*To catch the glory of the gold*
*In sunlight glancing by;*
*When faint, sweet bird-notes, trilling,*
*Woke the young green leaves to dance —*
*Then — Winter lingered in my heart —*
*That day you sailed for France!*

*You sailed for France,*
*And sailing, took*
*The heart of* spring *with you!*
*And all the heart and soul of me, —*
*The living me — went too;*
*And when the Summer's magic swept*
*The earth in riotous bloom,*
*And hung Night's loveliness with stars*
*And drenched it in perfume —*
*Ah! then I knew what Beauty, clothed*
*In Suffering, could mean;*
*For you were still in France,*
*And miles of ocean stretched between.*

# Silver Lining

*For you are* still *in France — and now*
*Brisk Autumn's in the air,*
*And little gusts of rose-gold leaves*
*Drop fitfully here and there; —*
*And so the Season's Pageant Stage*
*Is ever being set —*
*The Curtain rises ceaselessly,*
*It ceaseless falls — and yet,*
*The Spring can never come again*
*To me — until, perchance,*
*Some day* You *bring it back to me —*
Home *to me — from France!*

R. W. F.

## CHAPTER IX

A FORTNIGHT after the arrival of the cablegram, letters began to come; and once the connection between my Boy and me was established, France seemed not so far away.

The days went swiftly, in spite of their loneliness, and almost before I knew it spring had vanished, and June poised at Earth's threshold. With it came that first anniversary which opens this little book's pages.

And, renewing mentally the vows that had been so thrillingly breathed a year past, there was added a new covenant, deep in my heart, born of the whirl of events which War had brought; and this was it: "I, ——, give thee, ——, my Husband, to be our Country's Soldier — to have and to hold, for little time or long — until PEACE us do unite!"

And while I longed for the Boy on this

most significant day, in my heart was no sadness — only a great sense of pride and happiness that I belonged to him.

It is autumn now, and I have returned once more, after a wonderful summer with my dear people at home: a summer to which it was not easy to wave farewell — but I had my work to find.

In the meantime, the Boy had been commissioned, and my letters were now proudly addressed "Lieutenant." More than ever did I want to engage in War work.

And so, after devious and multiple paths, through which the reader need not plod, I found my niche.

From nine in the morning till five at night, I am a part (if only an "also ran") of that vast organization without which the progress of the Great Crusade would be sadly hampered — the American Red Cross.

That is my satisfaction and happiness.

It is a state of paradox in which so many

individuals find themselves to-day; a time of the greatest sacrifice and pain — and a time of richest experience and joy!

Good times, in the old sense, appeal not at all. The paramount issue (for me, at least) is to busy myself in such a way and to such an extent that I may not be ashamed to welcome, when welcoming time indeed comes, my soldier husband home, with my head held high.

You, who perchance are reading this, snug beside your cozy fireside, at arm's length from the husband who has never been away from you — to you this may seem a strange tongue. And yet it is for you I am speaking — to you who will shortly, perhaps, be called upon to *learn* that very tongue; to you I give the assurance from my own experience — that it is supremely worth the price. For out of all the pain of parting — all the days that tread, lonely, one on the other — all the wistfulness of longing, is unfolded a vision

of surpassing light and joy — a light "such as was never seen on sea or land." It is the unfolding of the Flower of Idealism, and its reward is twofold; it shows life in terms of history and humanity and it lifts the individual toward that height which his vision comprehends.

But if the need does not extend to you, after all, perchance this insight into another's intimate experiences will make that which you hold dear doubly so — and that which you strive to fulfill, the more worthy of attainment.

For myself, my dominant emotion is one of gratitude; to have been given the privilege of adding the fraction of a finger-weight to the Banner of Freedom.

Perspective has developed; essentials have been grasped, non-essentials have been automatically discarded. Out of the mist, "the rainbow through the rain!" — and at the rainbow's end, the gold of joy through faith.

And you who are numbered, or to be numbered, among the ardent throng — do not falter. The way is only a step at a time, and *always on the ascent!* With your eyes "unto the hills" — from whence most surely will come your help — you cannot miss the way. And as you climb, try unceasingly to "turn the dark cloud inside out."

Always ahead of us shines that wonderful goal, the radiance of which is beyond even imagination — journey's end; war's end! That goal which is faintly dawning beyond the far horizon of Horror and Helplessness — when *your* "Johnny," *my* "Johnny" — *everybody's* "Johnny" — comes "marching home."

*"There's a long, long trail a-winding*
*Into the Land of my Dreams;*
*Where the nightingales are singing*
*And a pale moon beams;*
*There's a long, long night of waiting*
*Until my Dreams all come true,*
*Till the day when I'll be going*
*Down that long, long trail with you!"*

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